



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Fact Sheet

Fish Passage

Early in the history of the United States, millions of culverts, dikes, water diversions, dams and other artificial barriers were constructed to impound or redirect water for irrigation, flood control, electricity, reservoirs and transportation – all of which changed the natural features of countless ecosystems. Many of those dams no longer serve their original purpose, but as barriers, they continue to block natural fish migration either to historic habitat or to spawning grounds. An estimated 2.5 million artificial barriers, including 75,000 dams greater than 6 feet, exist throughout the country.

The National Fish Passage Program links up with other Federal and State agencies, conservation and civic organizations, municipal and county governments and private landowners

to reconnect fish and other aquatic species with their historic habitats and to restore natural flows and fish migrations.

All the projects are voluntary and are only accomplished with willing partners.

Sixteen endangered and threatened species have directly benefitted from the Passage

Program, as well as many forage and game species. Natural flows and temperatures have been restored in streams for trout, herring, striped bass, shad, sturgeon, salmon, minnows and darters. Fish-eating birds such as eagles, osprey and kingfishers have more forage; bears, otters and mink also benefit from larger fish populations.

In 2001, the Service and its partners identified 278 potential fish passage projects, requiring \$44 million to complete. Thousands of additional barriers await identification and remedial action.

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